



The University of Texas at Austin Department of Nutritional Sciences

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK 2026 - 2027



INTEGRATED COORDINATED PROGRAM IN DIETETICS (ICPD) PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Integrated Coordinated Program in Dietetics is an integrated degree program that leads to the completion of a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition - Coordinated Program in Dietetics Option (BSNtr-CPD) degree, along with a Master of Science in Nutritional Sciences (MSNS). This section of the graduate handbook outlines components of graduate study that are specific to the ICPD program.

The Master's degree of the ICPD integrated program is designed to be completed with one year of enrollment beyond the bachelor's degree. Undergraduate students who are provisionally admitted to the program during their junior year take two graduate-level courses in Nutritional Sciences (6 SCH) during the Fall semester of their senior year, reserving the courses for graduate credit. Upon successful completion of the graduate-level courses (grade of B or better), students apply for formal admission to the Graduate School during their senior year. In support of the University's commitment to four-year graduation, the BSNtr degree is awarded as soon as undergraduate degree requirements, including approximately 1000 hours of supervised practice, are satisfied. The MSNS degree is subsequently awarded when the remaining graduate program requirements are satisfied. The total number of hours required to earn both degrees in the integrated program is 150 hours (BSNtr-120, MSNS-30).

The ICPD program serves multiple purposes. The ICPD track is a professional training program accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND), the agency overseeing education programs preparing students for a career as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). The ICPD program includes didactic learning, as well as hands-on practicum courses that satisfy the supervised-practice requirement for RDNs. Upon completion of the ICPD program, graduates immediately qualify to write the examination to become an RDN. The integrated degree program allows UT-Austin to keep pace with professional certification requirements mandated by ACEND that requires individuals who wish to sit for the RDN exam to satisfy all requirements and to also hold a graduate-level degree. Peer institutions (e.g., Ohio State, Purdue, UT-Southwestern, UT-San Antonio) offer similar integrated programs. The Department of Nutritional Sciences at UT-Austin retains top-performing undergraduate students in dietetics who seek to become RDNs by ensuring their education covers all requirements for professional credentialing through the ICPD program.

STRUCTURE OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin is composed of the Office of Graduate Studies, which includes the Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Studies staff, and all departmental/center **Graduate Study Committees (GSC)**. The GSC is the governing body for each program and is composed of all assistant, associate, and full professors active in the graduate program in a given area. GSCs set policy and supervise each graduate program. The GSC recommends admission of students to the program, sets requirements for graduate

degrees in that area, recommends students for candidacy for graduate degrees, certifies that all degree requirements have been met, and is responsible for assuring the high quality of graduate education in its area is maintained. Although members of a Graduate Studies Committee are usually drawn from a single department, committees for interdisciplinary programs are composed of members from several departments (or other administrative units).

The **Associate Chair of the Department of Nutritional Sciences Graduate Studies Program** oversees the curriculum and research governance of each departmental program. The current **Associate Chair of Graduate Studies** is:

Stefano Tiziani, PhD

DPRI 2.206; (512) 495-4706; tiziani@austin.utexas.edu

The **Chair of Nutritional Sciences Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)** will assist with the implementation of the guidelines and procedures for each departmental program. The current **Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) Chair** is:

Heather Leidy, PhD, FASN

DPI 2.838; (573) 825-2620; heather.leidy@austin.utexas.edu

Each department, division, or program offering graduate work also has a **Nutritional Sciences Graduate Adviser** who serves as the administrative link between the Graduate School and the departments, programs, or schools. The Graduate Adviser represents the Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies in all matters pertaining to the graduate program in the department or area. Questions about degree requirements and academic policies should be directed to the graduate adviser. The Graduate Adviser is also available to individually meet with students to discuss any graduate-specific concerns related to coursework, research, and requirements. The current **Graduate Adviser** for Nutritional Sciences is:

Heather Leidy, PhD, FASN

DPI 2.838; (573) 825-2620; heather.leidy@austin.utexas.edu

The **Director** of the Integrated Coordinated Program in Dietetics (ICPD) works closely with both the undergraduate advisor and the graduate advisor in Nutritional Sciences to provide guidance with the plan of study, associated coursework, progress, and/or timelines as they complete this unique program. The current **Director** is:

Monica Milonovich, MS, RD, LD

GEA 331; (512) 373-2798; mmilonovich@utexas.edu

The **Graduate Coordinator** plays a vital role in day-to-day operations of the department's graduate program. The Graduate Coordinator maintains student records and processes paperwork in a correct and timely manner. Most administrative questions concerning routine procedures, deadlines, etc. should be addressed to the Graduate Coordinator. The current **Graduate Coordinator** is:

Kait Meek

GEA; kaitlyn.meek@austin.utexas.edu

ICPD CURRICULUM

The ICPD integrated program is designed to allow undergraduate students in the BSNtr-CPD track to complete their training in an accelerated program that offers undergraduate- and graduate-level coursework, as well as the supervised practice hours required for professional certification, in as few as five years. Two graduate-level courses that provide advanced versions of nutritional sciences requirements for the BSNtr degree will be completed and reserved for credit during the student's senior year. These include two of the following:

- NTR 394.6: Study Design and Research Methods (Master's seminar with an emphasis on scientific writing)
- NTR 380K.3: Experimental Design and Statistics (graduate level statistics)

The BSNtr degree is awarded in the semester when undergraduate degree requirements are completely satisfied.

Students in the ICPD program have three potential options for completing the 30-hour program of work for the master's degree following their formal admission to the Graduate School and the successful completion (i.e., grade of B or better) of the two graduate-level courses discussed above (i.e., NTR 394.6 & 380K.3). Students can complete the following:

- Option 1: 24 additional hours of organized courses, including 12 hours of required CORE classes
- Option 2: 18 additional hours of organized courses, including 12 hours of required CORE classes, and a 6-hour Master's thesis or
- Option 3: 18 additional hours of organized courses, including 12 hours of required CORE classes, and a 6-hour Master's Report – which is only available (and required) for students supported by the Texas Performance Nutrition (TPN) fellowships.

If a student receives the BSNtr degree and subsequently does not complete requirements for the MSNS degree, the Department of Nutritional Sciences will ask the Graduate School to withdraw previously approved requests to reserve coursework for graduate credit so the previously reserved hours can be applied to the stand-alone BSNtr degree. The ICPD integrated program enables highly talented students to earn both the BSNtr and MSNS degrees after completing a total of 150 credit hours of coursework (120 undergraduate and 30 graduate) and 1000 hours of supervised practice.

ICPD GRADUATE COURSEWORK

For the MS component of the ICPD program, 30 total credit hours are required, distributed as follows:

- 12 hours in required CORE classes:
 - NTR 380K.3: Experimental Design – taken in senior year of the BS
 - NTR 394.6: Study Design & Research Methods – taken in senior year of the BS
 - NTR 390.1: Advances in Nutritional Sciences I
 - NTR 390.7: Advances in Nutritional Science II
- A minimum of 6 elective hours in the Nutritional Sciences graduate program.
- A minimum of 6 additional elective hours which can be NTR or non-NTR hours in a minor field.
 - For students choosing to complete a research thesis, 6 hours of graduate course credit (see below) will be substituted for the 6 additional elective hours to allow for the development and completion of an original research project and corresponding thesis.
 - NTR 698A: Thesis
 - NTR 698B: Thesis
 - For TPN students who are required to complete a report, 6 hours of graduate course credit (see below) will be substituted for the 6 additional elective hours to allow for the development and completion of an original research project and corresponding thesis.
 - NTR 398R: Report
 - NTR 398R: Report
- All students are expected to attend department research seminar each semester throughout their entire period of study, with exceptions for course schedules that interfere with the seminar schedule.

The ICPD Director will review and approve the proposed course plan of study. The ICPD Director and Graduate Advisor will review and approve the proposed Research Report or Thesis Research approach (when applicable).

Detailed descriptions of the graduate coursework offered in the Nutritional Sciences Graduate Program is found in **Appendix A**.

ICPD students seeking to complete a master's thesis should identify their thesis mentor during the senior year of the BS program. An ICPD mentor is often identified through volunteer participation as an undergraduate student in the research program/lab of the mentor. The research mentor serves as the "Primary Reader/Mentor" of the thesis project, and the supervising professor will suggest one additional person to be named to the thesis committee to serve as "Second Reader" or "Co-Supervisor." The Second

Reader may be the Director of the ICPD program but this is not required. A sample curriculum for the ICPD graduate program is presented below. More information about the development of the Master's thesis can be found in **Appendix B**.

Additional information regarding the Masters' Report can be found in **Appendix C**.

Sample Curriculum for the ICPD Graduate Program

Fall - Year 4 (undergrad)		Type	Hours
NTR 245C: Clinical Practice in Med Nutr		Undergrad	3
NTR 380K.3 Experimental Design and Statistics (hold for grad credit)		Graduate CORE	3
NTR 394.6 Current Issues in Nutritional Sciences (hold for grad credit)		Graduate CORE	3
Spring - Year 4 (undergrad)			
NTR 345M: Clinical Practice in Med NTR		Undergrad	3
NTR 372C: Practicum in Clinical Dietetics		Undergrad	3
NTR 372F: Pract in Food Serv Sys Mng		Undergrad	3
NTR 373S: Pract in Dietetics Admin		Undergrad	3
Summer - Year 4 (undergrad)			
NTR 374C: Pract in Comm Dietetics		Undergrad	3
NTR 374P: Adv Practicum in Dietetics		Undergrad	3
Fall - Year 5 (grad)			
NTR 390.1 Advances in Nutritional Sciences I		CORE	3
NTR Graduate Elective		Elective	3
Additional Non-NTR or NTR Graduate Elective		Elective	3
Options 1-3	Option 1 & 3: For those not completing a thesis: NTR or non-NTR Graduate Elective	Elective/ Requirement	3
	Option 2: For those completing a thesis: NTR 698A		
	Option 3: For TPN students completing a Report: NTR 398R		
Spring - Year 5 (grad)			
NTR 390.7 Advanced Nutritional Sci II		CORE	3
NTR Graduate Elective		Elective	3
Additional Non-NTR or NTR Graduate Elective		Elective	3
Options 1-3	Option 1: For those not completing a thesis or report: NTR or non-NTR Graduate Elective	Elective/ Requirement	3
	Option 2: For those completing a thesis: NTR 698		
	Option 3: For TPN students completing a Report: NTR 398R		
TOTAL			30

ICPD GRADUATE STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Depending on available resources and courses, ICPD graduate students may have the opportunity to be supported as a Teaching Assistant (TA). Compensation as a TA is dependent on the number of semesters completed and the program of graduate study. Compensation as a TA also includes coverage of tuition (9 credits) during the semesters the student is employed as a TA.

Teaching Assistants are graduate students who perform duties adjunct to regular classroom instruction under the supervision and direction of designated members of the faculty. They may not conduct regular classroom instruction or serve as instructors of record for any instructional activity; they fulfill a variety of roles of assisting faculty members.

Only individuals admitted to the Graduate School without conditions may be appointed as TAs. Students who have enrolled in graduate work at UT must be in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward an advanced degree before the appointment becomes effective. (These terms are interpreted by the Graduate School to mean having a 3.00 GPA or better and having GSC approval of satisfactory progress toward a degree.) TAs must hold bachelor's degree or higher degrees appropriate to the area of service.

Teaching Assistantships for international students may be contingent upon passing an Oral English Proficiency Assessment. If the student does not pass this test, they will not be allowed to hold the teaching assistantship for the first semester of admission. To qualify for a TA in the second or future semesters, the student must pass the proficiency assessment prior to the beginning of the semester enrolled.

To be eligible for appointment or reappointment as a TA, a student may have no more than two grades of temporary incomplete (X), or one grade of X and one grade of permanent incomplete(I) at the time of appointment or reappointment. Teaching Assistant assignments will be based on teaching needs of the department, as well as academic and professional background of graduate students willing to be TAs. Demonstrated competency in English is required for all instructional appointments. Recommendations are forwarded to the Chair of Nutritional Sciences. Notification to candidates for appointment or reappointment is handled by the Chair of the Department of Nutritional Sciences.

Appointment and reappointment as a TA are contingent upon satisfactory progress toward a degree as defined by the Graduate School and demonstrated effectiveness as a TA as demonstrated by student and faculty evaluations. A TA must be registered for at least nine hours during the long-sessions and for three hours during any summer term in which they are employed.

A Teaching Assistantship not only provides financial support but also helps the student to gain teaching experience. A TA is expected to carry out the duties attendant to the assigned courses with diligence and professionalism. A TA position will have a specified

number of hours associated with it, 10-hour, 15-hour, 20-hour, etc. position. This means that the student is being paid with the expectation that they will devote that number of hours per week to their teaching assignment, on average. In addition to the time spent actually teaching, the graduate student will need to hold regular office hours, prepare for lectures or labs, prepare materials, meet with the faculty supervisor of the course, and grade reports and examinations.

Meeting classes and office hours and providing quick turnaround on graded student is a serious matter to the Department and the University. If the graduate student becomes ill and is unable to meet a class or office hour session, they must notify their faculty supervisor as much in advance as possible so that the students in the course are not left abandoned. Failure to carry out the assigned teaching responsibilities is a very serious matter and is dealt with by the Department, the College Dean, and the Graduate School.

ICPD ACADEMIC POLICIES

Students admitted to the ICPD integrated degree program are expected to make satisfactory academic progress in completing required coursework and/or supervised practice each semester. At the end of the senior year, the Director of the Integrated Program will review the academic records of students in the ICPD to determine whether she/he is making satisfactory progress.

Probation. Students in the ICPD will be placed on probation if their cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0 while enrolled as an undergraduate student or falls below 3.0 while enrolled as a graduate student. An undergraduate student whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on probation and will be unable to take graduate courses. Following placement on probationary status, undergraduate students must enroll in lower- or upper-division courses on a letter-grade basis in order to improve their GPA and return to good academic standing. Undergraduate students who are placed on probation may not enroll in graduate-level courses until their GPA meets or exceeds 3.0.

Graduate students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on probation. The student must return to good academic standing during the next semester of enrollment or be subject to possible dismissal from the graduate program. Students who do not meet the standards of the graduate program may be terminated according to the same policies and procedures that are applied to graduate students in the existing MS/PhD program in the Department of Nutritional Sciences.

Dismissal. Students will be dismissed from the program if they fail to improve their academic performance while on probation by meeting minimal GPA requirements as defined in the General Information Catalog. A student may be terminated from the program if the GSC determines that the student will be unable to complete the remaining undergraduate and graduate course requirements while maintaining a 3.0 GPA. Since the requirements of the traditional, stand-alone BSNtr degree are a subset

of those required for the integrated program, students dismissed from the ICPD will be able to receive the BSNtr degree in the same time frame that the student was on when she/he applied to the integrated degree program. If a student is unable to complete the ICPD, she/he will be permitted to request permission to use the two graduate courses previously been reserved for graduate credit to fulfill requirements for the BSNtr degree.

CONGRATULATIONS AND GOOD LUCK!

Once you have completed the ICPD, you will be fully equipped to be a well-informed, effective, and successful Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, and we can't wait to see what you accomplish!

APPENDIX A – NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Study Design and Research Methods (NTR 394.6) – taken during BS

This course will allow learners to interface directly with the scientific literature to research independent projects, including analyzing study designs and methodology, hypothesizing about topics, developing manuscripts, and presenting topics to cohort groups.

Experimental Design and Statistics (NTR 380K.3) – taken during BS

This course prepares students to critically evaluate and design rigorous nutritional sciences research across the translational spectrum. The course will focus on research ethics and peer review; high impact research questions; study design selection; issues in collecting data for human nutrition, including diet, anthropometric, and biomarker data; and analysis techniques for nutritional sciences research. This course includes key methods for designing and evaluating research in nutritional epidemiology, experimental nutrition (e.g., controlled feeding trials, mechanistic models), clinic and community-based behavioral nutrition (i.e., interventions), and public health/policy.

Advances in Nutritional Sciences (NTR 390.1)

This course explores the continuum of complex metabolic pathways fed by macronutrients that drive myriad cellular processes. The journey of exploration begins with the integrated and orchestrated digestion and absorption of the various macronutrients, and then continues until the carbon skeletons created are either converted to macromolecules that facilitate cellular functioning or metabolized for purposes of bioenergetics. But most importantly, the course covers the complex pathways of metabolism in detail including their heavily coordinated determinants.

Advances in Nutritional Sciences II (NTR 390.7)

This course extends knowledge of nutritional biochemistry and metabolic pathways with a focus on the role of vitamins and minerals in energy metabolism, health, and disease etiology. Vitamins and minerals will be explored through their digestion, methods of absorption, bodily functions and results of toxic and deficient amounts. Functions and dietary levels will be considered in context of the physiology of related body processes and chronic disease through evaluation of current research.

Advanced Experimental Design and Statistics (NTR 380K.4)

This course is designed to cover data analysis using common statistical methods to properly interpret and communicate results in nutrition science.

Molecular Nutritional Sciences (NTR 390.6)

This course provides a general overview of the regulation of gene expression by diet, lifestyle and nutrition and the resulting modulation of disease development. The material will focus on the basic tenets of gene regulation and how nutrient intake affects gene expression and tissue metabolism and conversely how genetic inheritance affects metabolic nutrient requirements. Students will be taught how their own lifestyle and diet choices, as well as those of their parents' and grandparents', impact their current health status and their risk for future disease.

development (and potentially their children's risk), especially in the context of personalized medicine.

Nutrition and Disease Prevention (NTR 392.13)

This course explores the role of nutrition as a critical preventive measure for both acute and chronic disease. The current research supporting the role of nutrition as a preventative therapy is examined and evaluated. Students will work in teams to evaluate the validity of proposed nutritional therapies, and outcomes are shared in group presentations.

Nutrition Immunology (NTR 392.4)

This course prepares students to make recommendations for improving health through immune modulation using dietary components. The course will cover the clinically relevant aspects of immunology including inflammation, immune surveillance, allergy and autoimmunity. Students will also learn the current dietary strategies recommended to modulate the different aspects of immune function as well as understand clinical immune assessment and critically analyze and interpret current research findings.

Nutrigenomics (NTR 390.13)

Examine the interactions between nutrition and multi-level "omics" (e.g., genome, transcriptome, methylome) as they relate to chronic disease and health. Includes a focus on gene-diet interactions in the context of population genetic variation and the bidirectional molecular interactions that influence gene and protein expression as well as epigenetic modification.

Clinical Nutrition (NTR 390.8)

This course provides an in-depth examination of the physiological principles underlying nutritional care in the treatment of chronic diseases. Students will evaluate clinical guidelines, assess current research, and apply evidence-based recommendations to patient care with an emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration.

Community Nutrition (NTR 390.16, pending University approval)

This course is designed to cover evidence-based practices used to assess a group or community's nutritional status and tools to evaluate community intervention programs. It will provide students with an understanding of both the scope and skills associated with community nutrition education, health promotion, and disease prevention.

APPENDIX B – MS THESIS PROCEDURES & APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION

Structure and Review of the Master's Thesis. Under the direction of their supervising professor, students will develop an original research project that can include data collection, data analysis, a meta-analysis of existing literature, and/or experimental analysis. A master's thesis should have the following general structure:

- Chapter 1 Literature Review, which thoroughly covers the relevant literature related to the project
- Chapter 2 Primary Research, which is generally written in the quality and format of a journal publication, includes a brief introduction and discussion that puts the work in the context of the existing literature.
- Chapter 3 Conclusion and Future Directions, which provides a summary of the main findings and a plan for next steps

Guidelines for other required components of the thesis (e.g., abstract, signature pages, etc.) can be found at <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/navigating/forms>. Once the master's thesis is completed, under the direction of the student's primary mentor, the Second Reader will review and approve the thesis. A formal presentation of the master's thesis main findings in the departmental seminar is required.

Submitting the completed thesis. Once the thesis is complete, students must [upload the thesis to the Texas Digital Library \(TDL\)](#) BEFORE submitting the required printed pages. The Graduate School will not accept a paper copy of the thesis or report. There will be a final format check when the required pages are submitted. It is critical that the submission be complete and correct. After submission, no revisions or corrections will be allowed except for those required by the Graduate Dean.

Required Printed Pages. Master's students are required to submit a copy of the following pages to the Graduate School, [Main Building](#) 101, by 3 p.m. on the relevant deadline listed above. All paperwork must be submitted together in one PDF packet. Incomplete packets will not be accepted:

- A [master's committee approval form](#) with signatures of the supervising committee. ALL committee members must sign the master's committee approval form - no proxy signatures allowed;
- A copy of the [Copyright Tutorial](#) grade page - 100% score required;
- A [Statement on Research with Human Participants form](#); and
- Any requests to [Delay Publication](#).

Submit the forms whether or not human participants were included. If human participants were included, attach a copy of the IRB approval letter or waiver or exemption notification of the form. All master's students must be registered in NTR 698B their final graduating semester to submit a graduation application.

The Application for Graduation must have accurate information for it to be correctly routed to the appropriate people for signatures. The Graduate Coordinator in the program can answer

questions related to graduation. All Master's Students must complete the application, available here:

https://utdirect.utexas.edu/ogs/forms/candidacy/stu_appsList.WBX

Note: each semester has a deadline for completion of the application; failure to meet those deadlines will result in delay of graduation!

The graduate student should visit the Registrar's Addresses Page to check or modify their University record for name, current address, and phone number before submitting this application.

https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/utd/all_my_addresses/

APPENDIX C – MS REPORT (FOR TPN STUDENTS ONLY)

TPN students are required to complete a MS Report. The MS Report is an 12-16 page (double-spaced) literature review and pilot study related to a specific area of research. An overview of what is required is found below.

1. You must register for the Master's Report (NTR398R) during your fall and spring semester.
2. You will decide on a current nutrition-related topic and will work with 2 UT faculty members (primary advisor and secondary reader) willing to provide guidance and feedback as well as evaluate the Report.
3. The review component is expected to provide a summary of the current scientific evidence surrounding your specific nutrition-related topic and highlight the gaps in the literature. There should be at least 20 references to support your topic. Sections include the following:
 - Introduction (1-2 pages)
 - Overview of the nutrition topic and link to a health outcome
 - Question of Interest
 - Summary of each published study (research question, study design, results, limitations) related to the question, making sure to compare/contrast across studies (5-7 pages)
 - Overall Summary & Current Knowledge Gap(s) (1 page)
4. The pilot study component will vary depending on your specific project/research question. This could include analyzing existing data, collecting data, developing technology, education/research materials, etc. Sections include the following:
 - Summary of the pilot study and the work that you completed (1-2 pages)
 - Summary of the findings (1-2 pages)
 - Translation of the findings to future guidance/recommendations (1-2 pages)